**Congo Action Now**

 **December 18, 2011**

Facilitator: Pat

 Minutes: Pat

Present:  Mireille Tushiminina, Kelley Ready, Casey Gallagher, Pat Aron

Congo Action Now met on December 18, 2011. The meeting
began with check-ins. We missed the CANers who couldn’t be at the meeting. The
group continued to focus on the Massachusetts Congo Conflict Minerals bill as
well as addressing other items.

Mireille gave us an extremely helpful overview of the recent election in the DRC. Disregarding the obvious fraud, the DRC Supreme Court has declared Joseph Kabila to be the winner. People are working on legislation to boycott as well as seize property of businesses that support Kabila’s regime (such as airlines). Cabot (based in MA) is also being targeted. On Dec. 15 rallies were held all over the world to protest the election results and the news media is being contacted to publicize the fraud and violence.
Between 3,000 and 5,000 Congolese died during the past month of the campaign.
Almost all Congolese want Kabila out of power and it is thought that he would
like to leave.

Etienne Tshisekedi (major opposition candidate) could provide a strong transitional government and he would allow much less exploitation of minerals.

We began our discussion of the MA Congo Conflict Minerals bill by following up on actions we had identified at our November meeting. Kelley, Anna, and Pat were to contact specific groups to ask for their help with the bill. Pat had drafted a letter but decided not to finalize it until we had more specific actions to request. Pat noted that she had spoken with David at BC for Congo and he thinks they have members who can visit legislators. Also, at least one other Boston WILPF member will make visits. We will now each contact our identified groups to let them know the bill is in committee and to urge them to ask committee members for their support (visiting legislators with us if possible).

The next follow-up item was the sending of the recent UN report summary to the bill’s co-sponsors. Suzanne’s, Anna’s, and Pat’s people have received the report. Casey will try to send the report to everyone else we visited at the State House in October in order to promote the bill. – Pat will re-send her the list of legislators visited.

Anna has developed our new ChimpMail account and has contacted the complete CAN membership list asking people to register the names of their legislators (or their addresses so we can identify legislators). This database will enable us to more easily identify constituents of committee members or other legislators we need to lobby.

We are continuing to get letters to legislators signed asking them to support the bill. Kelley delivered letters to BC for Congo so they could ask for
signatures at their concert.

The group then proceeded to discuss the current status of the Congo Conflict Minerals  bill.
Pat reported on her recent talk with Krista, Rep. Walsh’s aide. The bill has been reported out of House Rules and has been assigned to the Joint Committee of State Administration and Regulatory Oversight. The bill has moved more quickly than we had expected. Three of the bill’s co-sponsors are on the committee including one of the committee chairs. Krista will talk with Rep. Walsh about the process and will let us know the next steps we need to take. Pat, Suzanne, and Kelley will notify the bill’s co-sponsors of the committee assignment and  will ask for their continuing support. We will need to contact committee members and meet with them or their aides. Pat will write up talking points for meetings with legislators.

The group discussed the need to coordinate visits to legislators with constituents and with other organizations but did not develop a plan – will need to coordinate in order to proceed with visits. Pat will re-draft her letter asking groups for their help after we get guidance from Rep. Walsh’s office. At this point we have two group leaders – Pat and Joan E. from WILPF – we need more people to take the lead in meeting with legislators.

The meeting ended before we could review ongoing efforts asking organizations to sign on as supporters of the bill. Mireille suggested that we coordinate with African Council of MA (Mireille is outreach coordinator), the Boston Pan-African Forum, and the African Presidential Research Archive. Kelley will contact these organizations. Mireille also  suggested that we work with student groups. Pat is coordinating with groups at
Boston Collegeand Clark University.

 Pat reported on her Dec. 8 phone presentation to the
  Extractive Industries Working Group in D.C. (invitation from the Missionary
  Oblates who had worked on the CA Conflict Minerals bill). The group will ask
  its MA members to send letters to legislators in support of the bill. It will
  be signing on as a supporter of the bill and made suggestions of other groups
  that may want to sign on.

David sent information on the BC for Congo concert
  that was held on Dec. 2. The concert was very successful with about 175
enthusiastic attendees. Several groups performed and there was a speaker from
the Enough Project. Fifty-one letters were signed and sent to  legislators
urging support of the Congo Conflict Minerals bill. BC for Congo
members will participate in visits to legislators. The group has gotten a
  positive response from college administration about the conflict-free campus
  campaign – will meet with the head of procurement next
month.

CAN has received new requests for presentations this
spring. Dr. Sealey would like for us to again speak to her International Social
Work class at the Simmons School of Social Work - Pat will speak to the class.
Dr. Tauriac has asked us to coordinate a film/presentation at both UMass Boston
andBoston College. The group agreed to accept these invitations – will determine who will present at our next meeting.

Pat informed the group that the most recent WILPF magazine Peace and Freedom includes an article about the new WILPF section in the DRC as well as a brief write-up on CAN’s work. She will send out a copy of the articles.

The Anti-Violence Against Women Act petition has not yet been delivered to Sen. Brown. Kelley will contact his office and arrange to deliver it. (This action has been put on holduntil after the urgent intervention required by Sen. Brown’s criticism of
Dodd-Frank).

We sadly said goodbye to Casey who is about to leave for Namibia to teach for a year. We
appreciate her tremendous contributions to our work and we wish her well! Casey
will send information on the CAN Twitter account to Pat who will ask Coleen to
maintain it.

The next meeting of Congo Action Now will be held on Sunday, January 22, 2012 at 2:30 at Pat’s house in Jamaica Plain. Happy New Year
to everyone!

**Agreements:**

  - Suzanne,
Kelley, and Pat will contact co-sponsors to inform them of the bill’s committee
assignment:

 Suzanne
- Sal DiDomenico, Barry Finegold, Linda Dorcena Forry, Jonathan Hecht,   James O’Day, Anthony Petruccelli,
Paul Mark

Kelley–  Corey
Atkins, Paul Brodeur, William Brownsberger, Carlos
Henriquez

 Pat
– Liz Malia, Sonia Chang-Diaz, Susan Fargo, Kay Khan, Peter Kocot, Jason Lewis,
Denise Provost, Carl Sciortino, Frank Smizik, David Sullivan, Benjamin
Swan

 Casey will send UN Report summary to legislators we visited – Pat will re-send
names to her

 Pat will write up talking points for people to visit
  legislators

We will all think about how best to coordinate visits to
  legislators

 Pat will draft letter asking for other organizations to assist with visits to
legislators

 Pat will respond to requests for presentations from Simmons Graduate School of
Social Work, UMass Boston, and Boston College.

 Casey will send Twitter information to Pat who will ask Coleen if she can
maintain the account

 Pat will send out Peace and Freedom articles

 Kelley will contact the African Council of MA, the Boston Pan-African Forum, and
the African Presidential Research Archive to ask for their
support

 **Agreements from Previous meetings:**

 Kelley will email the UN Report summary to 5
cosponsors

 We will all get copies signed of the letter asking legislators to support the
bill

Kelley will email student to see if she can get involved with updating our
website

 Kelley, Pat, and Anna will contact other organizations to ask for their
collaboration on the bill:

 Brandeis
  STAND - Kelley

 BC for Congostudents – Kelley (Pat has contacted)

 Promote Congo-Anna

 Boston WILPF - Pat

 Shalupe Foundation - Pat

 Clark students - Pat

 Enough
  Project – Kelley

 Pat will send regular updates to the CAN email list

 Kelley, Antonieta, and Pat will continue to follow-up with organizations to ask
them to sign on as supporters of the bill

 Kelley will contact Sen. Brown’s office and arrange to deliver the Anti-Violence
Against Women Act petition (**This action
is now on hold pending urgent intervention required by Sen. Brown’s criticism of
Dodd-Frank)**

**Women’s  International League for Peace and Freedom**